

June 4, 1958

Dear Eric:

After having let it lay low for months, we finally got around to doing some experiments on the effect of periodate, etc. on E. coli mating (with the suspicion that mucopolysaccharides should play an important role in the specificity of conjugation).

Surely enough, proper concentrations of periodate will differentially inactivate the fertility reaction of male cells, without killing them or inactivating female cells. This is an important lead, and aside from its theoretical importance, we are already taking advantage of the observation as a technique for more accurately controlling the mating process.

So of course I went to look for the RDE sample that I was sure had arrived after your letter of February 26, and that I would have put aside till I could get to use it. But I can't find it, nor can I find any copy of an acknowledgment that I would certainly have sent you. If you have had no acknowledgment of it, I must assume it never did arrive. In any case, I wonder if you could help us out again, as this now becomes quite an exciting issue for us! I will have to try to dig some up more locally too, but I'm sure you have the best material that could be gotten anywhere.

If Gus hasn't seen it yet, our paper came out in Nature for May 17, which just arrived here. I'm hoping to hear from him that he received some cultures from us!

Best wishes,

Joshua Lederberg